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OCI No. 0821/76  
September 10, 1976

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Racial Disturbances in South Africa

The riots, demonstrations, and work stoppages that began last June have occurred in widely scattered parts of South Africa. Blacks living in segregated townships have been chiefly responsible. Most of the resulting damage--homes, schools, businesses--has taken place in the townships, and blacks have suffered the most casualties--some 200 since June. By contrast only three whites are known to have been killed and perhaps 25-30 colored.

Although the initial riots at Soweto, an all-black suburb of Johannesburg, were the worst, the death toll has mounted steadily, with outbreaks in several other black areas around Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, and to a limited degree near Durban, Mafeking, and Kimberley. The most recent riots have been taking place in the Cape Town area and have involved South Africa's colored (mulatto) population. This week over 20 were killed. Since June the large number of black casualties has resulted primarily from the strenuous repressive tactics used by the South African police, although there was one serious instance of blacks fighting blacks in Soweto.

The rioting has not been totally confined to black areas. Some white residential sections have been vandalized, particularly those adjacent to the colored areas near Cape Town. Urban commercial areas frequented by all races have been the scene of looting and arson. There is also some evidence to suggest that coloreds are making common cause with the more suppressed blacks.

The large number of people involved, the participation by children of the black elite, and the violent nature of the disturbances, attest to the depth to which the blacks, and increasingly the coloreds, are unhappy over their status. We

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do not think the rioting is likely to subside anytime soon. We cannot discern any outside, i.e., foreign influence, but the demonstrators appear to be well-motivated and are aiming their protests at visible symbols of racial inequality. The continuation of the outbreaks at sporadic intervals in widely separated parts of the country makes it difficult to predict where and when disturbances will next occur.

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